

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners,

As a citizen who wants to be informed about the political and electoral issues that affect my life, I am greatly disappointed by the lack of informative television programming. Most everything I know about any political candidate is what I can learn from print media and the internet. Broadcast television has become a news wasteland.

Local public affairs programming is virtually non-existent--constituting less than one half of 1% of all local programming. More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections.

Since broadcasters have clearly failed in their obligation to serve the public interest, the FCC should define meaningful public interest requirements that include local civic and electoral affairs programming. At a minimum, broadcasters should air three hours per week of local civic and electoral affairs programming mandated at viewing times that are within reasonable hours (not buried at 3:00 AM, for example), with at least two hours devoted to substantive election coverage in the six weeks prior to Election Day.

As the elections approach, a well-functioning democracy demands that citizens have access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices confronting us.

The airwaves belong to the American people, not to broadcasters. This is the fundamental principle by which the FCC is supposed to operate, and American citizens demand no less.

Sincerely,

Marc Rubin
1015 Willow Ave
Hoboken, NJ 070303103